

Iraq war opponent Cindy Sheehan resigns from the Democratic Party

By David Walsh
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American antiwar activist Cindy Sheehan addressed an open letter to Congress May 26 announcing that she was leaving the Democratic Party, which now controls both houses of the legislature. Sheehan, whose 24-year-old son Casey died while serving in the US armed forces in Iraq in April 2004, came to prominence when she set up camp near George W. Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas in August 2005 as a protest against the war.

Her open letter came in immediate response to the final capitulation of the Democrats in Congress last week over an additional \$100 billion to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. She writes the Democrats, "You think giving him [Bush] more money is politically expedient, but it is a moral abomination and every second the occupation of Iraq endures, you all have more blood on your hands."

In her letter of resignation from the Democrats, Sheehan takes the politicians of both parties to task for their callous indifference to human life. She refers to the comment of Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, who said, after Bush had signed the authorization bill, "Now, I think the president's policy will begin to unravel."

"Begin to unravel?" Sheehan writes. "How many more of our children will have to be killed and how much more of Iraq will have to be demolished before you all think enough unraveling has occurred? ... With almost 700,000 Iraqis dead and four million refugees (which the US refuses to admit), how could it get worse? Well, it is getting worse and it can get much worse thanks to your complicity."

Sheehan notes that the Democrats' promise to take up the issue of war funding once again in September, remarking, "Let's face it, on October 1st you will give him [Bush] more money after some more theatrics, which you think are fooling the anti-war faction of your party." With the current daily death toll of 3.72 American troops per day, she goes on, the Democrats in Congress will "have condemned 473 more to these early graves. 473 more lives wasted for your political greed: Thousands of broken hearts because of your cowardice and avarice. How can you even go to sleep at night or look at yourselves in a mirror? How do you put behind you the screaming mothers on both sides of the conflict? How does the agony you have created escape you? It will never escape me ... I can't run far enough or hide well enough to get away from it."

Sheehan adds, "By the end of September, we will be about

80 troops short of another bloody milestone: 4000, and MoveOn.org will hold nationwide candlelight vigils and you all will be busy passing legislation that will snuff the lights out of thousands more human beings. Congratulations Congress, you have bought yourself a few more months of an illegal and immoral bloodbath. ... It used to be George Bush's war. You could have ended it honorably. Now it is yours and you all will descend into calumnious history with BushCo."

Sheehan's attack on the Democratic Party, including her pejorative reference to MoveOn.org, a liberal Democratic pressure group, has brought abuse down on her head from organizations with which she has been associated. In a bitter entry in her diary on the *Daily Kos* weblog written two days after her open letter to Congress, Sheehan notes that she has come in for harsh attacks from the liberal-left milieu for her rupture with the Democrats.

She explains that "I was the darling of the so-called left as long as I limited my protests to George Bush and the Republican Party. ... However, when I started to hold the Democratic Party to the same standards that I held the Republican Party, support for my cause started to erode and the 'left' started labeling me with the same slurs that the right used."

She continues: "Especially since I renounced any tie I have remaining with the Democratic Party, I have been further trashed on such 'liberal blogs' as the Democratic Underground. Being called an 'attention whore' and being told 'good riddance' are some of the more mild rebukes."

Sheehan upbraids those who propagate illusions in the present political set-up in the US. "People of the world look on us Americans as jokes because we allow our political leaders so much murderous latitude, and if we don't find alternatives to this corrupt 'two' party system, our Representative Republic will die and be replaced with what we are rapidly descending into with nary a check or balance: a fascist corporate wasteland."

She adds later: "This is my resignation letter as the 'face' of the American anti-war movement. ... I will never give up trying to help people in the world who are harmed by the empire of the good old US of A, but I am finished working in, or outside of this system. This system forcefully resists being helped and eats up the people who try to help it. I am getting out before it totally consumes me or any more people that I love and the rest of my resources."

She states that she is returning to California to tend to "my surviving children."

Sheehan personally is at something of an impasse. In

portions of her second statement, her disgust with the Democrats and their left hangers-on spills over into a more generalized criticism of the American population and into political pessimism.

Her current political uncertainty and disappointment notwithstanding, Sheehan is an authentic and outspoken opponent of imperialist war. In the most painful portion of her statements, she writes, “Casey did indeed die for nothing. His precious lifeblood drained out in a country far away from his family who loves him, killed by his own country which is beholden to and run by a war machine that even controls what we think.”

Clearly, the tension between Sheehan and the so-called

“left” has been growing for some time. For her, the vote by the Democrats to provide Bush with funding for the murderous war, a war that has already taken her son’s life and the lives of hundreds of thousands of others, was the straw that broke the camel’s back. For the liberal left, it’s business as usual—primarily the business of providing excuses for the actions of the Democrats in Washington.

Sheehan’s public repudiation of the Democratic Party, only months after the Democrats gained control of Congress, is indicative of profound shifts in political consciousness among substantial sections of the American people. It presages a growing search for genuine alternatives to the two parties of American imperialism.

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